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The insurance coverage level in Indias' fisheries sector is poor, compared to other sub-sectors of agriculture, says a study by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) here. CMFRI scientist Shinoj Parappurathu, who led the study team, also said that the fisheries sector has received little attention either at the Central or State levels and is limited to accident risks of marine fishermen, while the other major risks such as loss and damage to fishing vessels and gear and damage to coastal assets of fishermen are covered only at a limited scale across the country, including Kerala. "Moreover, no insurance policy is available in the country for risks, such as large scale decline in stock of fish species, damage of sea cages, loss of fish crops and damage to farm structures," he said in a release here on Sunday. The study was conducted in 14 fishing centres in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Odisha and among fish farmers in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, and information collected from the insurance companies and government departments was also analysed for the study.

Exposing the pathetic situation in the sector, the study found that the provision for vessel insurance, gear insurance and coastal asset insurance was quite low, with only one case of gear insurance reported from Kerala and a meagre 14 per cent of fishermen from Tamil Nadu having reported enrolment to coastal asset insurance. Insurance coverage of income risks owing to decline of fish stocks and price risks due to market price fluctuations was not reported by any of the respondents of the survey. It was also found out that the level of adoption of insurance in aquaculture is also very low.

The study found that none of the sample farmers who are involved in freshwater/brackish water aquaculture in Kerala and Tamil Nadu have opted for any sort of insurance coverage against common risks in the sector. On the reasons on why this is happening, the study finds that there was a lack of awareness among the fishing community about the need and benefits of insurance scheme and also the lack of trust between insurance companies and fishing community. Also, private insurance companies were not interested in entering the fisheries sector.